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**PSC MONITORS NORTHWESTERN'S PLAN  
TO EMERGE FROM BANKRUPTCY**

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Public Service Commission continued at its April 14 meeting to monitor the bankruptcy case of NorthWestern Corporation, one of three privately-owned natural gas utilities operating in the state.

Natural Gas Department Director Laura Demman reported to the five-member Commission on NorthWestern's reorganization plan submitted March 11 to a federal bankruptcy court in Delaware. In that plan, NorthWestern stated that it does not propose to change rates to its utility customers. NorthWestern operates natural gas utilities in four central Nebraska communities – Alda, Grand Island, Kearney, and North Platte.

NorthWestern filed for bankruptcy on September 14 last year and the Commission promptly announced it would monitor the case in the interest of the company's Nebraska customers. Similar agencies in other states in which NorthWestern operates also are following the bankruptcy.

"We want to ensure that the ratepayers are protected in this proceeding," Fourth District Commissioner Rod Johnson of Sutton said. "The Commission is looking after the best interest of the consumer. We want to make sure ratepayers are not penalized in any way because of this bankruptcy case."

Chairman Jerry Vap of McCook, who represents the Fifth District, said, "We're glad to see that they are moving forward with a plan. The Commission will continue to monitor the situation to see that anything we have jurisdiction over is done in the public interest."

The plan calls for the appointment of six new members of NorthWestern's seven-member board of directors. Creditors will have an opportunity to vote on the plan before the bankruptcy court holds a confirmation hearing on the plan.

NorthWestern hopes to emerge from protection under its Chapter 11 filing between October 1 and December 31 of this year. Public Service Commission members said they will scrutinize rates for NorthWestern's Nebraska customers.

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